Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of the claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for launching balls for sports practice comprising:

a tank (2) for housing a gaseous fluid under pressure;

a launch tube (3) whose section substantially corresponds to that of a ball (4) to be launched, said tube having an open end (7) for launching the ball (4) and having a seat (8) for positioning the ball (4);

an exhaust duct (5) of the fluid operatively connected between said tank (2) and said launch tube (3); and

a rapid opening device (6) for discharging on command said fluid from said tank (2) to said launch tube (3) through said exhaust duct (5), to cause the launching for the ball (4); and

throttling means (37) mounted in said exhaust duct (5);

~~characterised in that~~ wherein said throttling means are ~~adapted to~~ configured to be adjusted for ~~varying the~~ varying an effective section of the exhaust duct such that the effective section determined by the throttling means remains the same during a whole launch.

2. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein ~~characterised in that~~ said throttling means (37) ~~comprises a~~ comprises a fixed part (38) and a movable part (39) movable relative to the fixed part (38), [[the]] wherein a displacement of said

movable part (39) relative to said fixed part (38) ~~determining~~ determines a variation in the effective section of the exhaust duct (5) in correspondence with the throttling means (37).

3. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 2, wherein ~~characterised in thatsaid~~ said movable part (39) is constituted by a bulb obturator.

4. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 2, wherein ~~Characterised in that~~ said movable part (39) is constituted by a sleeve ~~whose~~ having an outer wall (40) slides proximity to the fixed part (38), an inlet portion for the fluid, and ~~which has a narrowing~~ a narrowed portion (41) having a section that is narrower than the section of the ~~in corresponding with its own~~ inlet portion ~~section for the fluid~~, and has one or more slits (42) extending astride the fixed part (38).

5. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein ~~characterised in that~~ said throttling means (37) ~~comprise~~ comprises one or more interchangeable ring nuts (61), each ring nut (61) defining a different fluid throttling ~~of the fluid~~ transit section in the ~~ehaust~~ exhaust duct (5).

6. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, ~~characterised in that said quick~~ wherein said rapid opening device (6) comprises at least one main valve (9) with rapid opening which controls the discharge of the fluid from the tank (2) to the exhaust duct (5).

7. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 6, wherein ~~characterised in that said quick~~ said rapid opening device (6) further comprises at least an actuation valve (11) which determines the actuation of the main valve (9).

8. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed 7, wherein ~~characterised in that said quick~~ said rapid opening device (6) further comprises at least a control valve (10) which drives the opening of the main valve (9) and is in turn controlled by the ~~actuation~~ actuating valve (11).

9. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in ~~claim 7~~ claim 8, wherein ~~characterised in that~~ said main valve (9) comprises a first movable obturator (12) actuated by means of a ~~pressuriable~~ pressurize-able first chamber (13),

wherein said first obturator (12) ~~being~~ is in a closed position when said first chamber (13) is pressurized and ~~going to the~~ goes to an open position when the first chamber (13) is depressurized, and wherein said ~~said the~~ control valve (10) ~~causing, when it opened,~~ is configured to cause the depressurization of ~~the depressurisation of~~ the first chamber (13) when said control valve (10) is opened.

10. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 8, wherein ~~characterised in that~~ said control valve (10) comprises a second movable obturator (14) actuated by means of a second ~~pressurisable~~ pressurize-able chamber (15), said second obturator (14) ~~being in the~~ is in a closed position when said second chamber (15) is ~~pressurised~~ pressurized and ~~going in the~~ goes to an open position when the second chamber (15) is ~~deprssurised~~

depressurized, and wherein said actuating valve (11) is configured to cause the depressurization of ~~causing, when it is opened, the depressurisation of~~ the second chamber (15) when said actuating valve (11) is opened.

11. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 7, wherein ~~characterised in the said~~ actuating valve ~~(110 is~~ (11) is a solenoid valve.

12. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 7, wherein ~~characterised inthat~~ said actuating valve (11) is remotely controllable.

13. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 7, wherein ~~characterised in that~~ said actuating valve (11) is a manual valve.

14. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 7 ~~characterised in that it comprises~~ further comprising two parallel actuating valves (11), said two parallel actuating valves (11) comprising a manually operated valve and a solenoid valve.

15-17. (Canceled)

18. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, ~~characterised in that it~~ further ~~comprise~~ comprising a pressurization circuit (20) for ~~pressurising~~ pressurizing said tank (2).

19. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 9 ~~characterised in that said pressuristaion~~ , further comprising a pressurization circuit (20) for pressurizing said tank (2) and ~~also pressurizes~~ said first chamber (13), wherein the tank (2) and said ~~and that~~ first chamber (13) being in fluid communication with one another.

20. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 10 ~~characterised in that~~ , further comprising a ~~said~~ pressurization circuit (20) ~~also pressurises~~ for pressurizing said tank (2) and the second chamber (15), wherein the tank (2) and the second chamber (15) being in fluid communication with one another.

21. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 18, wherein ~~characterised in that~~ said pressurization circuit (20) allows the automatically recharging of the tank (2) after each launch.

22. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed claim 1, ~~characterised in that it~~ further comprises means (43) for varying the position of [[the]] said seat (8) for the ball (4) to be launched in said launch tube (3).

23. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 22, wherein ~~characterised in that~~ said throttling means (37) and said means (43) for varying the position of the seat (8) for the ball (4) are operatively associated with one another to vary the position of the seat (8) according ~~to the~~ to regulation of the transfer of the fluid from tank (2) to the launch tube (3) and vice versa, according to a predetermined relationship.

24. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 2, wherein ~~characterised in that~~ said seat (8) for the ball (4) to be launched is rigidly connected to the ~~mobile~~ movable part (39) ~~of the adjustment means~~, the displacement of the movable part (39) causing a corresponding displacement of the seat (8) for the ball (4) to be launched within the launch tube (3).

25. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 5, wherein ~~characterised in that~~ each interchangeable ring nut (61) ~~nut 961)~~ also determines a different ~~positioning~~ position of the seat (8) for the ball (4) within the launch tube (3).

26. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, ~~characterised in that~~ wherein when the ball (4) is in the seat (8), between the seat (8) for the ball (4) and ~~the end of the launch tube (3) opposite the open and~~ the open end (7) ~~is also identified, when the ball (4) is in the seat (8),~~ a third chamber (45) is defined in which the fluid expands at the moment of the launch, and ~~in that~~ said exhaust duct (5) is connected to the launch tube (3) in correspondence with the seat (8) for the ball (4).

27. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein ~~characterised in that~~ the tank (2) has a variable volume.

28. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, ~~charaterised in that it~~ further ~~comprises~~ comprising means for enhancing launch precision (67).

29. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 28, wherein ~~characterised in that~~ said means enhancing launch precision (67) are constituted by an annular element (69) positioned at an appropriate distance from the ~~open and~~ open end (7) of the launch tube (3).

30. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 29, wherein ~~characterised in that~~ the annular element (69) has a slightly greater inner diameter than the inner diameter of the launch tube (3).

31. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, ~~characterised in that it~~ further ~~comprises~~ comprising launch noise reducing ~~meands~~ means (68).

32. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 31, wherein ~~characterised in that~~ the noise reducing means (68) are constituted ~~by an~~ by an annular chamber (71), of adequate volume, mounted coaxially to the launch ~~tube (30, and~~ tube (3), said annular chamber (71) having an inner slit (72) obtained in correspondence with the open end (7) of the launch tube (3), and a plurality of lateral slits (73).

33. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 32, wherein ~~characterised in that the~~ a total passage section in said annular chamber (71) is not much smaller than the section of the launch tube (3).

34. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 32 ~~characterised in that the inner surfaces of~~ wherein the annular chamber (71) have inner surfaces which are coated with a sound absorbing material.

35. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, ~~characterised in that~~ wherein said fluid is air.

36. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, ~~characterised in that it~~ further ~~comprises~~ comprising a support structure which allows ~~to adjust the~~ orientation of the launch tube (3) to be adjusted.

37. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, ~~characterised in that it~~ further ~~comprises~~ comprising a programmable electronic unit which ~~can enable its automate~~ enables automatic and remotely controlled operation of said apparatus.

38. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, ~~charcterised in that~~ wherein the exhaust duct (5) has a smaller section than the launch tube (3).